

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR’S COMMISSION ON  
HISPANIC AFFAIRS  
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2010

Time: 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Place: House of Delegates  
Montgomery County Delegation Room  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland

Present: Chair Y. Maria Welch, Vice Chair Ricardo Martinez, Richard V. Cook, Veronica A. Cool, Lydia Espinosa Crafton, Christina M. Diaz-Malone, Ricardo Alberto Flores, Elizabeth Ysla Leight, Luisa Montero-Diaz, Nicolas H. Ramos V

Ex-Officios Present: Genevieve Segura, Susan Spinnato

Absent: Elizabeth C. Bellavance, Javier G. Bustamante, Mariana Cordier, Colonel Robert L. Hylton, Maria T. Pinto Johnson, Carmen Ortiz Larsen, Hector G. Manzano, Sonia E. Mora, Arelis A. Pérez, Lea Ybarra

Staff Present: Jessy Mejia, Agnes M. Smith

Guest Speakers: Yvonne Magee, Special Projects Coordinator, Prince George’s County Planning Department  
Ricardo Campos, Census Senior partnership Specialist for Maryland  
Israel “Izzy” Patoka, Director, Governor’s Intergovernmental Affairs Office  
Senator Alex Mooney  
Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez

**I. Call to Order and Greetings**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Y. Maria Welch who informed the community that the Commission has a membership of twenty-one and literally come from around the State of Maryland. It is to bring individuals who represent the communities from different professions, life experiences, etc. The Hispanic Commission is a very rich commission.

Commissioners introduced themselves and the counties they represent to the community.

Chair Welsh noted that the Commission started taking the approach a little differently with the public meetings. What they have done is have the committees and chairs taking responsibility for the meetings. Tonight's meeting will be hosted by the Public Policy Committee, Ricardo Flores. She noted that the Commission has some special projects coming up such as the Prince George's County Envision Initiative. She invited Ms. Yvonne Magee, Special Projects Coordinator, Prince George's Planning Department to tell the community a little bit more about the project.

## **II. Guest Speakers**

### **Yvonne Magee, Special Projects Coordinator, Prince George's Planning Department**

Ms. Yvonne Magee thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak to the community. The Prince George's County Envision Initiative is a call to action. It is an initiative designed to create a vision for Prince George's County and an implementation strategy for a vibrant community and a high quality of life for everyone. It's built on two major premises:

1. It deals with everything that impact the quality of life. She represents the Maryland National Park and Planning Commission in Prince George's County. It deals with many more things than land use or parks and recreation which would be the initial forte. It's everything that impacts the quality of life such as health, social services, transportation, education, etc.
2. It is collaborative. It is bringing together all of the stake holders of Prince George's County. No longer are we looking at government to take care of all the business, but how can the people who live in Prince George's County, how can people who have businesses in Prince George's County, how can people who own property in Prince George's County, even the young people come together to develop that vision and then move forward with an implementation strategy so that everyone feels responsible for taking certain actions.

Over the past year they have gone out in the community to try and spread the word and gather the input to engage all of the people who make up Prince George's County. As a part of that initiative, one of the areas where they are weak is in the Hispanic community. Tonight what they have charged to do is a special forum designed just for the Latino community. The forum will be an all Spanish speaking. Other persons are welcome to come but they need to be able to understand the Spanish language. They are suggesting that it's not enough to just tell people that they are welcome in and that we want your opinion, but they are trying to find ways to do some additional outreach in the community. The English speaking people will have on the headphones at this meeting, so that the interpreters will be speaking to them. She told the Commission that they are appealing to them to help spread the word and get other people in Prince George's County or who have interest in Prince George's Count. They are suggesting that this belongs to all of the stake holders in Prince George's County, and this is more than just the people who live there. There will be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting scheduled for Saturday, March 20,

2010. They would like to engage at least 1,000 or more Prince Georgians at that meeting. They have approximately engaged 10,000 people in the process. The goal is 50,000-80,000. They would like to at least get 10% of the population engaged. She again asked the Commission to participate and encourage the community to come out and participate. They know that they are only going to be as strong as each individual person that makes up Prince George's County. Ms. Magee asked Commissioners to register. She noted that there will be daycare available, lunch and transportation provided.

A question was asked as to whether they would be advertizing on Hispanic language media and radio.

Ms. Magee answered that they would be advertizing. She also asked the Commission to give suggestions on any particular stations that they think would have the most impact.

It was noted that America Speaks is the organization that has been partnering with Prince George's County. This is a quality effort to get this organization that is very well known for diving deep in the community and getting a lot of engagements.

Ms. Magee told the Commission that they have had six forums and one youth forum so far. The youth forum was that Saturday in December when we had the first snow and there were 200 kids in attendance.

### **Ricardo Campos, Census Senior Partnership Specialist for Maryland**

Mr. Ricardo Campos spoke to the Commission about the partnership program with Census 2010. It thanked Administrator Jessy Mejia and the Commission for the wonderful work that they have been doing to make and understand the community in all the different areas in Maryland; to ensure that we have a complete count for the State of Maryland. This effort has been going on since January 2009. The Partnership Program has established two teams in Maryland which include five partnership specialists. His team works within the western part of Maryland. They have been knocking on doors of different organizations, elected officials, community based organizations, tribal communities, churches, businesses (especially Latino) in the hard to count areas that the local Census offices have defined. They have four local Census offices in Maryland located in Rockville, Largo, LaPlata and Frederick. Mr. Campos noted that they let the different organizations know the importance of the U.S. Census. He noted that it is required through the U.S. Constitution for every ten years. He told the Commission that every year the federal government allocates more than four hundred billion dollars. This is why it is very important for you to get involved. He told the Commission that the community does not want to listen to the federal employees, but they will listen to the leaders, the key officials, etc. The Census is very simple with only ten questions. He told the Commission that the Census is easy, safe and important. It can be done in ten minutes. Mr. Campos spoke about the communication campaign that started in January. They have been working with the Commission in order to develop a very aggressive campaign in the Hispanic community especially with the radio stations. He noted that some of the local Census offices already have the areas to be targeted within the next six

weeks. Census day is April 1, we only have six weeks and the work ahead of us is a lot. He told the community that there help is needed in order to create awareness in the community.

A question was asked to Mr. Campos as to the make-up of his team. He noted that on his team there are people who speak Tagalog, and four of them speak Spanish. They are also seeking to hire crew leaders, enumerators and follow-up staff for after Census Day who will go door to door to make sure people fill out the form.

It was noted that the business Spheremactical will be housing Census personal in March for people to come to, fill safe and welcome. They are trying to get other companies to have programs like this where there is a friendly environment for people who aren't sure what the Census is about.

Mr. Campos said that they are requesting partners to become BCQAC (Be Copuneted Questionnaire Assistance Centers). They are asking for 10-15 hours a week in your organization. This will help neighbors who do not know how to fill out the form. The forms will be in five different languages. This project includes churches, community organizations, etc. The Census will be staffing, the BCQAC, they just need the office space. It doesn't have to be an elaborate space, just a small area.

Administrator Mejia highlighted the role of the Commission with the Census. She noted that they are asking people to help them identify questionnaire assistance centers. Administrator Mejia noted that in June 2009 the Commission launched the Hispanic Statewide Complete Count Committee at the Commission meeting in Silver Spring. Since then they have been working with the Census office to provide information to the community. They are doing a very close to Census date effort to promote the Census even more so in the community. They are working with Montgomery County and Prince George's County along with other entities on an educational promotional campaign. It is a four point plan: 1. Media Awareness – where time slots will be allocated on various radio shows to bring in experts from different fields to talk about why the Census is important from their perspective. There will be educational experts, health experts, business community leaders and legislators to speak at these high rated shows in Spanish; 2. Door to Door Educational Conversations - with targeted hard to count community areas. This is in partnership with CASA de Maryland and a few other organizations; 3. Festival/Rally in Takoma/Langley Crossroads - Saturday, March 27, 2010 which legislators will be in attendance. This event will start in Gaithersburg at Town Hall, next it will stop at another fair in Wheaton in front of the Latino Economic Development Corporation and it will end at Commission's event; 4. Awareness of Census form Collection Effort After April 2010 – in May let the community know about the collection of the Census forms if they haven't sent it in. Administrator Mejia noted that if you know of any leaders who would like to help with the Census please see her or Mr. Campos.

Chair Welch again spoke about the importance of Census. She noted that the Census is not about documentation, this is null and void. Everyone needs to be counted. We lose \$1,000 per year for ten years for each person not counted in Maryland's budget. Chair Welch again thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. Tonight's meeting is to raise awareness of legislative efforts. The Commission is hosting a Legislative Round Table in the building of the people to have a dialog about the significant issues that are shaking up the 2010 legislative session which without exaggeration will dictate on a very basic level the future welfare of our community. We do not need to stress or go into further detail the economic situation our nation is facing these days. When one family is distressed, we are all affected by the ensuing impact, job loss, economic contraction, foreclosures and rapidly decreasing family health consisting ability. In Maryland our state and legislators leaders understand the compounding impact of this distress for the minority communities. They are working harder than ever before. She noted that Governor O'Malley stated in his State of the State Address, *"We are here because we care about people – all people. And to safeguard our children's future, we are committed to the work of justice, security, job creation, environmental sustainability, and fiscal responsibility, understanding that progress for one requires progress for all. In times of great adversity, we don't make excuses – we make progress."* She noted that as part of this progress, this Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs has worked extensively for the past year serving as the vehicle of dissemination of information and resources of social economic relief from our state to our state's Hispanic community. Housing, preservation, economic expansion, increasing access to quality healthcare and progress education is part of the Commission's mandate. Tonight's meeting is to raise awareness of the legislative efforts and have dialog with legislators who more than anyone else in the State is keenly attentive to the vast undertaking toward our economic vitality. Chair Welch introduced the members of the Public Policy Committee: Ricardo Flores, Chair, Javier Bustamante, Ricardo Martinez and Mariana Cordier. She told the legislators that on behalf of the entire Commission thank you once again for your work and for being here to share.

#### **Commissioner Ricardo Flores, Public Policy Committee Chair**

Commissioner Ricardo Flores introduced the legislators and dignitaries who would be speaking on legislative agendas.

#### **Israel "Izzy" Patoka, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives**

#### **Liaison, White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives Director, Inter Governmental Affairs**

Mr. Izzy Patoka gave the Commission greetings from Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown. Mr. Patoka spoke on behalf of the Governor's legislative agenda. He noted that Chair Welch spoke on the Governor's State of the State Address on February 2, 2010, and in that address he spoke about fiscal responsibility, economy, protecting home ownership, creating job and about the achievements made in Maryland by choice and not by chance. The legislative agenda is grouped similarly to the way the Governor

described it in the State of the State Address. He has a number of administration bills that is packaged in an area of jobs and economic development, energy and environment, education, and miscellaneous bills. He noted that January 20, 2010 the operating budget for FY 2011 came in 3% below spending affordability. The general fund was about \$13.2 billion dollars. In relation to four years ago it was \$13.6 Billion dollars. He noted that it is lower, which is something that has not happened in Maryland's history. At the same time in balancing the budget and bringing it below spending affordability levels Maryland has maintained AAA bond rating. Maryland is one of seven states that have maintained that bond rating. Throughout the four years of the O'Malley/Brown administration, he's cut out \$4.6 billion dollars. If you add in FY 2011 it will be \$5.6 billion dollars and 35,000 positions while at the same time protecting K-12 education. He noted that two years in a row, Maryland has been number one in education. He also maintained the State's rainy day fund at five percent. Also by choice not by chance, maintained \$250 million in the school construction program in these very difficult times. Mr. Patoka spoke of some other budgetary issues such as the job creation recovery tax credit, unemployment insurance bill, electric vehicles for energy tax credits, Governor's P-20 Leadership Counsel, Higher education investment fund, race to the top, teacher tenure, foreclosure prevention, etc. He noted that the Governor has a bill moving forward that he presented last week in regards to a mediation process before foreclosure making it more difficult in Maryland to put a family out of its home. Mr. Patoka spoke about a bill that provides for lifetime supervision for violent offenders and sexual predators. He thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak.

### **Senator Alex Mooney**

Senator Alex Mooney spoke about the Hispanic Heritage Month bill that he is co-sponsoring. He wants to make Hispanic Heritage Month a bi-partisan effort. He noted that he was surprised at the feedback that he received from some of his constituents and supporters who was mad at him for putting in this bill for Hispanic Heritage Month. He read some of the comments he received for putting in this bill. He noted that the sheriff for his county is deporting everyone he can find without documentation and particularly Hispanics. He wanted to put this in to show it's not a republican or democrat issue, that Hispanic's are hard working people. He told the Commission that any group can have a bad apple, politician, businessmen, teacher, etc., but to take a whole group as something that should be looked at and not being treated with the same respect as any other human being is wrong. He was proud to put this bill in and hopes it passes this year.

### **Short Intercession**

### **Delegate Josephine Peña-Melnyk**

Delegate Josephine Peña-Melnyk told the Commission that she is honored to serve the people. She noted that every issue that deals with health comes to her committee. She told the Commission that there are six committees in the House, where they listen to the bills, vote on bills and then it comes to the floor. She noted that a lot has been done for the community. She said that this is an interesting session and it also is an election year.

She had fifteen bills but she's now down to twelve. She said that working on the bills is a little bit different because of the budget. She spoke to the Commission about a bill that she feels they will approve since it relates to Census. She told them that prisoners are counted in the district they are incarcerated. They are not counted in the residence they came from in which they should. She noted that the family still continues to help that person, travel and most likely they are going to go back home when they are done. Her bill says when you count prisoners you should really count them at the address prior to incarceration. She noted that one of the really important reasons for her bill is basically because of the fact that you get the extra population. In getting the extra population you don't get the representation you should. The bill is titled "No Representation Without Population". She noted that the Census has decided to take the prison population out and put it in a special database. She also has a bill that deals with wages. Under the current definition of wages that overtime is not included under the definition of wages. That means if you work and your employer decides not to pay you and you sue, you can only get time and a half, opposed to being able to get three times damages. She told the Commission that she came here grassroots and she stays in touch with the community. She represents everyone but she is sensitive to the issues that affect the Hispanic community. She let the Commission know that this is their office and they are open to suggestions. She said she is so grateful to be able to speak to the Commission. She apologizes that she has to leave since she is getting an award at 7:00 p.m.

### **Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez**

Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez said she was happy to be here and was happy that the Commission was here. She said they needed the Commission there and to become very familiar with what's happening in Annapolis. She noted they need the community to push, shout and make your voices known. It's important for you to know what they are doing. She noted that there is not enough writing letters, e-mails and phone calls. She told the Commission that this is something she hopes they will help them with. She said there needs to be some training so that the population knows how to talk. She said when there's a gun bull someone received six hundred e-mails in one day. She told the Commission that she's in the appropriation committee that do the \$9 billion dollar budget on Medicare, health, education, etc. It's all about money. She noted that they are mandated by the constitution to pass a balanced budget which is hard in these economic times. Her focus is on the neediest. She will protect those that can't protect themselves. Delegate Gutierrez noted that they have received additional funds from the federal government for services such as Temporary Case Assistance but don't have staff to process payments. She told the Commission that they have a lawsuit since the cases have doubled in this recession. She said that her number one issue is education. This year she has two bills. One of the bills is getting us to look at the importance of attending school. She is part of a national dropout prevention committee that presented that chronic absences from K to 5/6 grades is a pre-cursor for dropping out. She noted that when you began measuring chronic absences ten percent of the school year, twenty days a year from the early grades can predict who will be falling behind. Her bill says that every school has to keep track of absences on a daily basis and report on a weekly basis to principal for a nine week basis. She noted that it's not only important to get the data but

to give a positive message. Her other bills concerns international calling cards. Her bill is to have an expiration date on the international bills. She called the Attorney General's office that enforces the laws and asked how many complaints they have received. They have only received five complaints. Millions of dollars is being scammed from the community. She told the Commission that the community needs to start complaining. She said there is a website on consumer affairs that is not translated, so we need to push to have it translated. The squeaky wheel catches the worm. She said she is honored to be here and she told the Commission to keep up all the good work. Delegate Gutierrez spoke about the New American Caucus which represents foreign born legislators, first or second generation has invited the Census to Annapolis to have a press conference on the hard to numerate. She said on March 19, 2010 the big Census bus will be here. We want to be counted.

The Commission recognized the new secretary of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Alexander Sanchez.

### **III. Questions and Answers**

Mr. Patoka made another comment on the budget. He noted that yesterday there was some activity in the legislature to try to figure out how to manage the budget in a different way. Senate Bill 1004 took a different approach towards the budget challenge. It is appreciated that it's looked at differently, but it's such a challenge that there are cuts to local levels that are so severe when you try to manage it in a different way. He noted that if you live in Baltimore City, Montgomery County or Prince George's County, you are in a range of \$100 million dollars in cuts in that proposal. Anne Arundel County and Baltimore County is in the \$50 million dollar range. The point it is trying to make is there is no easy way to do this. He noted that Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown have taken a very responsible approach at presenting a budget to the legislature that pushes the state forward, positions the state in a way that once were out of the recession we can move ahead. He doesn't want to dismiss the hard work by the good legislators, but the solution is not easy and it's painful shifting certain numbers that has a dramatic impact on a county/municipality.

Question about anti-gang bills in House and about more education for crimes and drugs. It was noted that they need to call the Speaker of the House to get more details. Delegate Gutierrez said that this is an election year and there is no money, so a lot of those running for office want to show that they are being tough and on time. She noted that there are about seven or eight bills that focus on gangs. Some of the worst ones may attach felonies unto all kinds of gang activity. One gang activity tired was dressing like a gang member. Another one just takes all the felonies and attaches it to the gang section. The Speaker of the House has one that says there needs to be more collaboration between schools and state prosecutors so that information is available. What we want also is to focus on prevention. She says she believes something is going to pass because there is going to be some pressure once the issue is raised. She hopes that the money that will go to law enforcement from a bill that focuses on the Kingpin will go to the top instead of the on-going criminalization of our youth.



It was noted that there is a provision that would treat sixteen and seventeen years old as adults for certain gang related infractions. Another provision will take away the discretions of the judge in the sentencing of gang related infractions. It was noted that there are about twenty bills related to gangs in the general assembly.

Someone spoke about childhood hunger in Maryland. He wanted to know why persons in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties could not get food from the Maryland Food Bank.

Delegate Gutierrez answered that the many people do not know that the Maryland Food Bank does not serve Prince George's County, Montgomery County or the capital area. There is a capital budget allocation for getting a grant for Capital Area Food Bank. She said that this is an educational process for those who could be donating.

Mr. Patoka told the Commission that ending childhood hunger is one of the Governor's core fifteen goals. He said that Rosemary Johnson, Executive Director, Governor's office for Children, is fully engaged in that very specific activity especially wrap around services related to that. He said he would be glad to share contact information with Commission.

Mr. Brian Banks, Capital Area Food Bank, Director of Advocacy and Community Outreach said that one of the issues that they have especially in Lincoln Park where there are Hispanic population that have children born in the state and we want to apply for food stamps because they are eligible based on their children, but the problem is they are afraid to apply for the federal program.

Delegate Gutierrez said that she would notify the Secretary of the Department of Human Services to address that issue because they could facilitate in a way that's protective of an individual's privacy. Have a way for the children to be on the food stamps and not a major fear of the parents.

The Commission recognized Earl Adams, Chief of Staff, Lt. Governor's Office.

There was a question on service to immigrants. He spoke about a woman going to the hospital after a domestic violence altercation and the hospital refused to serve her because of her legal status. He wanted to know what we can do about this.

Delegate Gutierrez said that unfortunately what we are seeing is we are going in the wrong direction with services for immigrants. At the federal level she noted that for the health care reform, they are cutting back on legal permanent residents who usually have five years of access to some benefits. This has been cut. For undocumented, there are no federal dollars. She noted that at the local and State there are some programs that usually are run rather discreetly to supplement some of the money. There is a federal law that says no one will be denied emergency services, so if someone goes to the emergency room with a true emergency and they will ask for that information, but if it is a true emergency they must treat that person. They may not keep them there, but there is that

federal mandate. She said people are trying to even get that removed. She said there are some protections and if there are specific cases she would be very glad to help out.

A question about what the federal and state law is concerning the Hispanic legal establishment in the United States like the TPS? Delegate Gutierrez answered that the Good side is when you have a TPS (Temporary Protective Status) then you have a work permit and social security number (can go out to find jobs and drivers license), but that is it. All other federal benefits you are not entitled to. Even legal permanent residents that have five years towards citizen right now in the healthcare reform is cutting back on what use to be services to them. That's a real crunch. That's why she recognizes Governor O'Malley when they give grants to the local areas. She noted in Montgomery County they invest enormously. She also told the Commission that Senator Mooney talked about his hate mail you should read some of hers. Anytime they speak up on behalf of the services for the immigrants there are groups that are organized to cut back even on those services.

The Commission recognized Ms. Ruby Stemmler, former Executive Director, Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs and presented her with a gift for the hard work and dedication she gave to the Commission.

The Commission spoke about the 2009 Annual Report that represents the work of the Commission. The report was created by Administrator Jessy Mejia. There is research, data reports, etc.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.